

# Trimming the Tree

By Fred M. Reeves, Jr.

One of Powell's claims to fame was the Pine tree that grew next to the old bank and post office. At one time it was thought it might possibly be the largest living Christmas tree in Ohio. In 1997 it had to be destroyed because of its condition.

Numerous articles have been written about the tree over the years. Following is one story never addressed.

At the time the Liberty Township Fire Department began trimming the tree for Christmas, I was a member. For about nine years I assisted in this annual task. Besides ground work I was one of those who worked in the tree.

The star at the top was made by Eugene Hess. The first one was a wooden frame attached to a steel fence post and edged with a neon tube. It was quite heavy and seventy five feet above the ground it felt even heavier and was awkward to handle. A few years later Mr. Hess constructed an aluminum frame for the star, attached to an aluminum pipe. It was much lighter and easier to handle in the tree.

The tree was decorated with the star at the top and several strands of lights strung from top to bottom. I no longer remember the number of strand or how many bulbs were on each. The strands were fastened under the star near the top of the tree and the bottom ends pulled into the trunk and wired into a switch panel. Above the switch panel was a transformer which was connected to the star by a wire running up the trunk of the tree. The transformer boosted the voltage sufficiently to light the neon tube.

The first person up the tree carried a line with him. Upon reaching the top he secured the line and threw it out of the tree to the ground. It was then secured at the ground or held taut by several helpers while the star and light strings were drawn to the top of the tree along the line.

The star was brought up first, base first in order to keep the fragile neon tube away from the trees branches. With the help of the second tree man the star was raised and secured to the topmost five or six feet of the tree. The second man would then move part way back down the inside of the tree. At this position, with the aid of a pike pole, he would see to it that as the lights were raised, they were positioned as far out on the trees branches as possible. Around and around the tree they were placed.

As the top man safely secured the wires at the top of the tree, another wired the bottom end into the switch panel. This was done year after year for I really do not know how many years. To the best of my knowledge no one was ever injured and there was never any damage as a result of the work and wiring done by the many crews.

One interesting facet of helping trim the tree was the view from up there. Most of the days I helped, as I remember, were crisp, clear and sunny. From that height you could see for long distances. It was an interesting view of an area for which I had a strong familiarity from the ground level, after some twenty years playing and hiking over all I could see. I wish I could have sat there for an hour and just absorbed what I could see.

Now you have learned the rest of the story.